

people from the mighty Massachusetts delegation. We're proud you're here. Thanks for coming. Andy Card, the Chief of Staff here at the White House, is a longtime Patriots fan. He's constantly reminding me how great the Pats are, on a Sunday by Sunday basis. And Andrew Natsios as well is a Pats fan. Obviously, we've got quite a few here. If the Rose Garden were bigger, there would be a lot more people here, I assume. Welcome. I'm glad you're here.

The thing—a couple of things impressed me. One, you never lost a home game. That's really good marketing. *[Laughter]* That's a smart way to do it, to fill up your stadium and have your fans go home happy every game. I watched some of your games. I appreciate the dramatic comebacks that you were capable of making. I like it when a kicker ends up winning the game. You like it when the kicker ends up winning the game. I know Adam is with us today. I am really impressed at how cool you are under fire, and how—like, I need a few suggestions before a press conference, if you don't mind.

I also appreciate so very much the coach. I don't know what it's like in the locker room, but I remember when you were here last year—or 2 years ago—and you said you were going to say a few words and you said like four words. *[Laughter]*

Coach Belichick. I got carried away.

The President. Yes, right. You got carried away. *[Laughter]*

Here's what I like about this team: They had a thousand hours of volunteer service to communities in Massachusetts and New England. That's a lot of hours for people who are spending a lot of time practicing and reading playbooks. That is an unbelievably important example for champions to set for others. I know you supported the Boys and Girls Club and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund, the R.O.S.E. Fund to end domestic violence. I really want to thank you for that. Listen, it's one thing to be a champ on the field, and obviously, that's what every player strives for. But to be able to be a complete person like you have been is really important, and you set such a good example of what it means to serve something greater than yourself.

I know there's a lot of fans that come to your game. You also know there are fans that are rooting for you who wear the uniform of the United States military—a lot of Pats fans out there who are scattered around the world, doing everything they can to defend us and to protect us. They are cheering in places like Afghanistan and in Iraq and in other countries. It is—I can't tell you how important it is for them to see the action from home, to see the great players performing on the field of play. It's also important for them to know that our players care for them a lot, that they understand that we're grateful for their service and grateful to their families as well for the sacrifices they're making.

We have got some unbelievable troops, fantastic men and women who understand that they're serving something important, and that is security for our country and peace and freedom around the world. And the fact that players are willing to serve their communities reinforces that service of our troops.

So thanks for what you do. Congratulations for getting back here to the Rose Garden. My hope, of course, is that I'm back here again to see you next year. *[Laughter]* Your hope is that you come back.

Welcome back. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Brady, quarterback, Robert Kraft, chairman and owner, Bill Belichick, head coach, and Adam Vinatieri, kicker, New England Patriots.

Remarks at Butterfield Junior High School in Van Buren, Arkansas

May 11, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I appreciate it. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Todd, thanks for having us. *[Laughter]* That story he told reminds me of the time when I had just got elected Governor of Texas, and a friend of mine said, "Why don't you call old Bascom Bentley on the phone?" He's an east Texas guy, and he said, "Why don't you call Bascom Bentley on the phone and just wish him the best." So I picked up the phone and dialed old Judge Bentley. He's one of these east Texas

judges. You probably know the kind I'm talking about here in Arkansas. [Laughter] I said, "Judge, this is George W. Bush calling." He said, "Come on, Cliff, quit pulling my leg." [Laughter]

So, Todd, I understand how those phone calls can go. [Laughter] But we are serious about coming here because Butterfield Junior High is a place of academic achievement. That's why I'm here. It's a place—I'm here to congratulate this school and to hold you up as an example to the country. You're raising the bar. You see, this is a school that expects the best for every student. You're reaching for high standards, and more importantly, you're making progress toward meeting those standards. You're doing your job.

I know the school year ends on May 27th. And I bet some of the students are kind of looking forward to that date. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, I remember the feeling, myself, but summer vacation has got to feel better for you after a year of accomplishment. And this past year, students at Butterfield have accomplished a lot.

Not only am I here to hold up the school and talk about setting high standards and making sure people achieve those standards, I'm here also to thank the teachers and the staff members and the parents, who believe in the potential of every young person and are willing to work hard to make sure every young person achieves that potential.

Not only do we want to thank Todd for being a principal; it turns out that really good schools have got really good principals, people that are smart and capable and who believe the best. But really good principals also have got hard-working staffs, and I know how hard it is to welcome a President. I mean just take a look at those light fixtures—I don't—I'm not sure if that's a permanent part—[laughter]—of the gymnasium. But for all those who put on this event and put up with my entourage, I thank you for letting me come by.

I appreciate your Governor showing up. He's a good friend of mine. He's an excellent person—Mike Huckabee is with us today, in case you don't recognize him. [Laughter] I'm proud of Mike. He said, "Look, I'm going to set an example by taking care of my own body before I ask others to do the same."

He's exercising, and he's eating smart, and his health is a lot better for it.

I appreciate Lieutenant Governor Win Rockefeller joining us as well. Thank you, Governor.

I'm proud to be able to work with a really fine Member of Congress from this district, in John Boozman. Where are you, John? Yes, thank you. Yes, there he is. I know Cathy and Kristen and Lauren are here as well, his wife, Cathy, and two daughters. I'm glad you all are here. The only problem I've got with Boozman is he keeps talking about the Arkansas-Texas game. [Laughter] I know it. I shouldn't have brought it up. [Laughter]

I appreciate Dr. Merle Dickerson, who is the superintendent of the Van Buren School District. Merle, thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate so very much—I know the importance of a good school superintendent. See, when it came time to name the Secretary of Education, I picked a superintendent in Rod Paige. He was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. I saw him in action in implementing policies that raise standards and encourage the best for every student. So I know the importance of a good superintendent, and I appreciate you, Merle.

Ray Simon is with us today. Where are you, Ray? Oh, there you go—blending in nicely. Ray is the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. He's the former director of the Arkansas Department of Education. He works for Rod Paige. In other words, what I'm telling you is we pick good people to staff the Federal offices, people who understand the principles of the No Child Left Behind Act, which I'm about to describe to you.

I appreciate Ken James, the director of the Arkansas Department of Education. Thank you for coming, Ken.

Mayor John Riggs is with us. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? Mr. Mayor, I'm glad you're here. People give me advice all the time, so sometimes I like to give people advice. And Mr. Mayor, my only advice to you is, fill the potholes. [Laughter]

I want to thank the Junior High Trailblazers for hosting me today. I appreciate the students letting us come on your campus. I

hope you don't mind having the classes cancelled for a while today. *[Laughter]*

I also met Alyse Eady today. Where are you, Alyse? There she is. Alyse, thanks for coming. Let me tell you about Alyse. She's a sophomore at Southside High, and she is a tutor at the Boys and Girls Club. The reason I bring up Alyse is because I want to remind everybody here what the strength of this country is.

Now, a lot of people talk about the military being the strength of this country, and I see we've got some fine troops here. Thanks for coming. And the military is an important part of our strength. As a matter of fact, we're counting on the military in theaters overseas to make us more secure. We're counting on brave men and women to help spread freedom in parts of the world that desperately need freedom. We're counting on our military to make America more secure by spreading peace.

And that's what you're seeing right now. On your TV screens, you're seeing tough work, because there are people who can't stand the thought of free societies springing up in the middle—in the midst of hatred and violence in the Middle East. But our troops are making sacrifices for our short-term and long-term security. A peaceful Iraq, a free Iraq, which is going to happen, will make America more secure.

Part of our strength is the military. I intend to keep the military strong. Our men and women are going to have what it needs to keep the peace. Part of a strong America is a prosperous America. That's part of our strength. It's not the strength. It's part of the reason we're strong, and we'll keep our prosperity strong. But the real strength of America is in the hearts and souls of our citizens, and that's important for our country to understand.

No, the true strength of this country happens when people hear the universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. And here is a tenth grader in high school who's heard that call, has taken time out of her life to mentor and tutor children who may not have as much love in their life as she has had because of her mom and dad, Lewis and Lady.

My call to the citizens of this country, whether they be in Fort Smith, Arkansas, or Van Buren, Arkansas, or anywhere else in the country, is to take time out of your life and follow your heart and help somebody who hurts, feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless, surround somebody with love who wonders whether or not their future is bright. No, the strength of this country, as witnessed by this young soldier in the army of compassion, is the heart and soul of the American people.

And another part of the strength of America is the fact we've got a lot of teachers who care deeply about the students. The students—it's probably going to take the students a little while to appreciate the teachers. *[Laughter]* But I think when you look back, you're going to find out these people are some of the most important people you'll ever have in your life. And I'm not saying that just because I married a teacher. *[Laughter]* By the way, Laura is doing fabulous. She's a—*[applause]*.

The teachers here need to know that our Nation appreciates every man and woman who devotes a lifetime to building knowledge and character of the young people of this country. Teaching is one of the great callings, one of the most noble professions, and America deeply appreciates the service of America's teachers. For those of you who are a teacher at this school, thank you for what you do.

I'm here today to talk about making sure our schools work. A little over 2 years ago, I signed into law an historic, bipartisan act of Congress called the No Child Left Behind Act. And the theory of this law was straightforward, and here's what it said. It said the Federal Government is spending more money on education, but for the first time, we're asking for results. That's a change. In the past, we used to send checks from Washington. And by the way, Washington should not be primary funder of schools in America. That's up to the States and the local people.

But we had targeted money, particularly for poorer students. And we helped to send the checks, and we just hoped something good happened. That was the old way, "Here's your money, and maybe something positive will happen." Now we're sending the

checks, and we're asking the question, "Are the children learning to read and write and add and subtract?" That's not that tough a question, is it? It seems like it makes sense for taxpayers' money—in return for taxpayers' money, to determine whether or not we're meeting some basic goals. If you don't ask the question, you never find out the answer. If you don't say, "We're sending you more money. Now please show us whether or not a child can read." If you don't ask, you'll never know until it's too late—until it's too late.

As well we better figure out who needs help early, before it's too late. I mean, one of the reasons you ask the question, "Can you read or write and add and subtract," is you want to diagnose early. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose it. The importance of the No Child Left Behind Act is to find out who needs help.

And so we've left behind an old attitude. See, I think some schools—there was this attitude that certain students can't learn. And so this—"Might as well shuffle them on from grade to grade." It's easy to shuffle the so-called—what they call hard-to-educate students through the system. It's easy to quit on families who might live in inner-cities or rural areas. It's easy to quit on kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language. It's easy, but it is not fair. And that's not how we do things in the United States of America.

I believe every child can learn. That's what I believe, and so do the people here at this school. So we've raised the standards for every public school. We're challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're—we require testing in the basics and holding schools accountable for results. An accountability system is how you determine whether or not what you're doing in the classrooms is working.

Under the new law, when children are falling behind, the schools that need the most attention get extra help, extra money so the children can catch up. Let me repeat what I just said. Under the new law, when we discover that children are falling behind, that are not meeting standards, those schools get extra help, extra money to make sure that people are brought up to the standards.

Schools will have time to improve. They will be able to use the accountability system to determine if they have the right curricula. Sometimes schools use the wrong curriculum. Sometimes they think this kind of reading program works, when, in fact, it doesn't. And they must have time to adjust, but at some point, there has to be an end to mediocrity.

The attitude in this bill says no child should be trapped in a school that does not teach and will not change. In other words, there is time to change. There is time to change, but if you refuse to change, and somebody is still trapped in the school that is not meeting standards, then something has to happen. Parents need options to help their child. Federal dollars will follow the child.

For example, if a school—a child is trapped in a school for several years that is—that's not meeting standards, the Federal Government will pay for after-school tutoring, and the parent can choose all kind of tutoring options, whether they be public or private. One parent—a parent can send the school—a child to a different public school. In other words, when—there has to be accountability in order for a—I mean, there has to be a consequence in order for an accountability system to work. When schools do not improve year after year, without consequences, we will not see change. That's just a fact of life.

And so the new law says, "You've got time to meet the standards, which we have raised. You've got time to improve." But because there's now consequences, parents will have more say in their child's education, and that's important, because we want parents to be at the center of the education system in America. We want our parents more involved.

There's no better way to get parents involved than by publishing test results for each school. Think about this. First of all, under the old system, a lot of parents believed their local schools were doing just fine because that's what they were told. "Oh, don't worry, Johnny is doing just fine, and our school is too." But they never measured. And sometimes, that wasn't the case. Now parents don't have to take anybody's word for it. They

can see the results themselves. An accountability system says, "We'll measure, but we're going to post the results for everybody to see." If they see excellence, just like at this school, it will give them solid ground to thank the teachers and the principals for doing the job we expect. But if they see failure, like any good parent, they're going to want to know why. "Why can't my school be like Butterfield? What is it about our school that doesn't match the performance of Butterfield Junior High?" In other words, an accountability system, if properly used, will help people achieve a greater standard and will encourage more parental involvement.

Now, let me make sure you understand one thing: I strongly believe in local control of schools. I believe firmly—there is a difference between asking the question about whether or not a child is learning and insisting that teachers and principals are free to teach the way they see fit. Superintendents and school boards are free to make change where they see change is necessary.

The No Child Left Behind Act raises expectations but leaves control where it belongs, at the local level. See, you can't provide people excuses. There's no better excuse than saying, "I would have done it this way, but the Federal Government told me to do it this way." I fully understand that. In order to make sure that there is an accountability system that works, you not only measure, but you then say to people, "It's up to you to chart the path to excellence." You don't want Federal bureaucrats who you've never seen in Crawford County, Arkansas, making the decision for the classrooms in county—Crawford County, Arkansas. You need local control of schools so people who are making those decisions are accountable to the parents and the local citizens.

For more than 2 years, we've been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have now drawn up plans to measure performance in every school. Notice—they drew up the plans. See, the State of Arkansas drew up its accountability plans. People in Puerto Rico decided the accountability system to use. This isn't a Federal test. The local people, the State people made the decision

as to how to measure, and every State is reporting the information to the parents.

And we're seeing progress. Let me tell you the facts. The test scores for fourth grade math around the Nation went up 9 points between the years 2000 and 2003. See, I'm able to tell you that because we measure. If we hadn't measured, I couldn't tell you that. Eighth graders improved by 5 points in the same period. In other words, math scores are beginning to go up—still too low, but they're heading toward higher standards. Reading scores for fourth graders increased in the vast majority of States that tested between 1998 and 2003, including the State of Arkansas. See, your reading scores are going up here.

I'll never forget the day a woman looked at me—she's an African American friend of mine—and she said, "You've got to understand something, Governor Bush"—at the time—"reading is the new civil right." See, if you can't read, you can't realize the great promise of America. That's why we want every child reading. The good news is the reading scores are going up.

Since 2000, average math scores in Arkansas went up 13 points in fourth grade, and 9 points in eighth grade. By the way, that's higher than the national average.

Things are happening in the country. When you raise the bar and you hold people to account, it's amazing the results you can get. And that's incredibly positive. Here at Butterfield Junior High, you have every reason to be proud. In 2003, this school met the adequate yearly progress standard expected under No Child Left Behind. In other words, the State put out a set of criterion and measurement standards, and you met it, right here at this school.

Let me tell you what Traci Sellers said. Is Traci here, by the way? Probably not. Traci—I'm about to quote you. *[Laughter]* She's an English teacher. She said, "The No Child Left Behind makes us aware of what we're doing and how we can improve. It encourages us as teachers to go that extra step, so that every child can succeed." I appreciate your attitude. I appreciate your hope.

Think about what she said: "It makes us aware of what we're doing." In other words, are we doing the right thing? Are we meeting

expectations? "Am I doing my job?" she says, "and the accountability system helps me understand whether I am or not." She said, "How can I improve?" What a fantastic attitude. Here's a teacher who loves her children, says, "I want to make sure I'm doing the job, and if not, I want to figure out how to do the job better."

That's why you have an accountability system. It says—it encourages us. In other words, instead of being discouraged by the system, it encourages. That's not the way everybody feels in America. There are people that don't like to change, and there are some complaints that I'd like to address today. Let me first by telling you, I think it's easier to make excuses sometimes than needed improvements. That's just human nature, isn't it? But the problem is we don't need people making excuses for educational failures in America. We need change.

When it comes to testing, I've heard every excuse in the book. I bet the Governor has too. See, we put strong accountability measures in when I was the Governor of Texas, and I went around the State explaining it. And then the No Child Left Behind brought an avalanche of complaints as well. Some object to regular testing because they believe schools will just teach the test; that's what you hear. I'm sure you've heard it. Well, think about that for a minute. If a test measures basic knowledge, the basics in math or reading, then teaching the test means you're teaching a child the basic knowledge of reading and math.

In other words, for a child to pass a reading test, you had better understand how to read. And therefore, in order to help the child pass the test, they've got to know how to read in the first place. And the reading accountability systems help people determine whether or not the child has got the basic tools necessary to be a good reader. That's what we're talking about here.

The whole point is this: It is not enough to hope that students are learning. I mean, that's just, to me, an excuse why not to measure. We need to know the ones who are learning and the ones who are not learning. Some believe that the standards of No Child Left Behind are too high. They say that if you raise expectations, all you're doing is set-

ting up children to fail. Yet this law requires students to perform at grade level, which doesn't seem like it's too high a bar to cross.

I mean, we're asking children to read at third grade level if you're in the third grade. Why is that raising expectations too high? I mean, my goodness, that's what society should expect. If you want the kids to learn to read at grade level, then you better insist they learn to read at grade level. That's the standard that is important, and it's the standard that we must hold true to if we want to make sure every child has a chance to succeed in our great country.

Teachers and parents here today know this when it comes to standards: If you expect nothing from a child, if you expect low—if you have low standards for every child, don't be surprised at what you get. That's a fact of life. When you have high expectations, children have a way of rising to meet those expectations. High standards do not set children on a path to failure; high standards set our children on the path to success.

Other critics say it is unfair to measure the performance of minority groups and unfair to require schools to improve the scores amongst all groups. That's a complaint you hear. These critics say we shouldn't fault a whole school just because some African American or Spanish students are not progressing. They're missing the higher—the people who say that missed the entire purpose of the law, and that is to make sure that no child of any background is left behind, see. That's the purpose of this law.

The reason we measure success and problems group by group—that's what's called disaggregating data. In other words, we want to know—we don't want to look at the school as a whole; we want to look at the people in the school. And that's the difference. We want to look at the data based upon individuals. We want to know student performance. See, you've got to make sure the schools are serving every student. So in other words, when you look at the school as a whole, you don't know whether or not certain children are being left behind. You don't know whether certain children need extra help.

And there's an achievement gap here in America today that we've got to close. There's an achievement gap between the test

scores of white and minority students. Nationally, on reading tests, black and Hispanic fourth graders score at least 26 percentage points lower than white students in the same grade. We've got to do something about that. If we want this country to be a hopeful country for every citizen, if we want to make sure every person can realize the American Dream, we've got to close this gap. And what the accountability system—they'll help us close that gap by determining who needs help. No, we want America to be promising for every single child of every background so that not one single child in America is left behind.

Another claim is that under the new law, we're punishing schools that are not making progress. See, sometimes when you change, people are quick to criticize. And one of the complaints is that schools get punished that aren't making progress, but people who make that claim ought to read the law. The truth is, the lowest performing schools are getting extra money to improve. That's what the—that's the truth.

In 2003, we spent \$234 million to assist underperforming schools to make sure people aren't left behind. In other words, we said, "Here's a problem, and here's some extra money to help you fix it." In 2004, we'll at least double that amount. In other words, the Federal Government is saying, "Measure, and, oh, by the way, when we find mediocrity, we'll help, but the local people have got to change. You've got to change what you're doing in order to make sure that children can learn." We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them do their job.

We also understand it can take some time to get there. Some say the No Child Left Behind Act doesn't provide enough money to meet our goals. First, let me tell you again what I said. It's the primary responsibility of the State and local governments to fund schools, not the Federal Government. But the additional testing required by the law—in other words, the Federal Government did say, "Okay, you've got to test in return for money." We're helping to pay for the tests. People say, "Well, it's an unfunded mandate to put accountability systems in place." No,

the accountability systems are largely funded by the Federal Government.

Second, if my 2005 budget is enacted, Federal spending on elementary and high school education will have increased by 49 percent since 2001. In Arkansas, that's an extra \$112 million Federal dollars for your public schools compared to 2001.

Nationwide, since 2001, we've already increased funding for low-income schools under Title I—that's the money for the poorest of students—by 41 percent. That will rise to 52 percent if Congress approves my budget, which would mean an additional \$37 million to help people in this State.

In other words, we're doing our duty. We understand that people need extra help when it comes time to addressing problems early, before they're too late. And the Federal Government is responding. And I also want to remind you that we've done another thing—and Laura is very much involved with this—we've kicked off a major initiative to make sure our children can read at grade level by the third grade. We have quadrupled Federal funding since 2001 for America's reading programs—by the way, making sure that when we fund programs, that they use scientifically based programs, reading—not programs that sound like they might work but programs which actually do work in teaching the children of America how to read.

This No Child Left Behind Act is a good law. It's a good, solid law. But I understand some adjustments need to be made, even in the best laws. So we've listened to schools and teachers, and we're responding in practical ways. We're making sure that the progress of special ed students is judged by standards appropriate to their development. In other words, as you measure a special ed student, there must be some flexibility in the measurement standards. And we know that.

We're giving schools more time to bring students who don't speak English as a first language into the accountability system. If a fellow shows up at school and can't speak Spanish—I mean English—and only speaks Spanish, they need some time to learn the language before they become a part of the accountability system. They don't need a lifetime of learning, but there needs to be some flexibility in the accountability systems.

We're giving schools in rural areas more latitude in meeting teacher qualification standards. In other words, we're flexible in the application of the law. Yet I will never compromise on this goal: Every child can learn the basics, and every school must teach the basics.

A lot of the No Child Left Behind Act is—focuses on early grades, and that's good. In other words, my attitude is, and I think the attitude of the experts is, when we get it right early in the grades and stay focused, we're going to have a bunch of kids getting into high school who are literate, smart, and capable.

But right now we've got some people that need help when it comes to reading. I mean, there have been some kids that have been shuffled through that are now in high school, and they're struggling to learn how to read. And we'd better get it right now, before they get out. And so I'm asking Congress to pass a \$100 million Striving Reading Initiative, intensive intervention in children's lives who cannot read, before they get out of high school. It's an essential part—I mean, that's the minimum we can do. That's the basic part of making sure that a child has hope.

We'll use resources to help the school districts to train teachers so they can get the right kind of help and use a curriculum that works. I mean, there are good curriculum that can work. The school districts need the help of implementing those curriculum, and that's what this money will be for.

I also proposed a \$120 million increase for the Mathematics and Science Partnership program. In other words, we want to make sure kids can read; we also want to make sure they can do math and science. But we've got some new jobs that are being created that require new skill sets, and it's not good enough to shuffle kids out of the schools that don't know anything about math and science. And so the creation of these partnerships will help school districts set up effective math and science programs.

I believe that in every school, we ought to continue to raise the bar, and one way to do so is to make sure that the advanced placement programs are vibrant and active across our country. Right here at Butterfield, you offer pre-8 AP courses, which is good—

preparing these children to take advanced placement. Advanced placement means you're raising the bar as high as you can possibly go.

I've proposed increasing money from the Federal Government, double the current amount we spend, for teacher training, to help good-hearted teachers become AP teachers.

And I fully recognize as well there are some low-income students. When they go home and say, "Look, I'm getting ready to take the AP exam," and the mother or father will say, "How much does it cost," and they lay out the cost of the AP exam, the mother or dad says, "No, I think we'll use the money for something else," see. So the child prepares to take the AP, and then Mom or Dad look at the fund—look at the cost, and they say, "No, we'd like for you to take the AP exam, but we need this money for rent or food." The Federal Government ought to help low-income students pay for the fee so they can take the AP exam. We want to be raising the bar for every student, and the entry fee should not be an excuse.

One of the things we need to do is encourage math and science professionals from the private sector to teach part-time in our high schools. And so we've got what's called the Adjunct Teacher Corps, which is a neat program, when you think about it. Got somebody here in Fort Smith, Arkansas, who's an engineer. They may have—he or she may have worked for a while, and they may be retired, and the school district—I don't know if the high school principal is looking for a science teacher or not; he may be. But it makes sense to have—to encourage citizens to get back in the classroom as a second career, to lend their talents.

You've got what you call a State Scholars program here in Arkansas. Governor, thanks for implementing it. It's an initiative that we announced here 2 years ago, which brings businesses and college officials in the middle schools and high schools to encourage students to take a more demanding coursework load. In other words, when you get—people can get inspired to take tougher courses, we ought to try to do so. The program is raising the completion rates in algebra II and chemistry and physics among Arkansas high school

students. In other words, you've got more students now taking algebra II and chemistry and physics, and that's going to benefit your State.

See, when you've got people with those skills getting out of high school, and somebody is looking to put a business here, they can say, "Look at this. Look at the base of knowledge amongst people that we can employ in this State." People are likely to bring work here if the potential workforce has got the basics in math and science. And that's what you're doing. I want to expand the State Scholars program nationwide, just like we've done here in Arkansas. It's effective. It works.

And there ought to be incentives to encourage students, and one way to do so is to give those students who finish a State Scholars program a boost in their Pell grant scholarship. In other words, we're saying to kids in high school, "Reach higher. Here's some people to help you reach higher, some local college folks or businesspeople. And by the way, when you take a tougher course load and pass, you get additional scholarship money from the Pell grant." We've expanded Pell grants. I want to enrich them to encourage students to reach for the stars. So I've sent a proposal to Congress where they would receive an additional \$1,000 during each of their first 2 years of college. This will help 4,000 Arkansas seniors a year. This will provide an incentive for people to say, "I want to do a better job in high school."

What I'm here to tell you is, I understand that public education is essential to the future of this country. It's essential we get it right. I'm here at Butterfield because I understand a good school is the gateway to hope. And we want that gate open all across America.

After decades of missed opportunities, after missing chances to make sure every child has got the basics to succeed, we finally reformed the public schools of America. It took a lot of work. It took a lot of work to convince people that change is needed. But Congress listened; we passed a bill. Let me tell you something, when you get a "yes" vote from both Senators of Arkansas and both Senators from Texas and both Senators from

Massachusetts, you've got yourself a bipartisan piece of legislation.

And we're not backing down, see. I don't care how much pressure they try to put on the process. I'm not changing my mind about high standards and the need for accountability, because I know the promise it holds out for the—[*applause*].

We're not going back to those days where we just kind of hope something happens. We're not going back to the days where kids just got moved through, and they weren't sure whether or not they could read, and at the end of the system, they said, "Oops, they can't read." Those days were too pessimistic for me, and they don't represent the great values of the United States of America. See, we believe in the dignity of every human being. We believe in the worth of every child. We're optimistic people. We believe in raising the standards. We believe in giving schools the resources and flexibility they need. We have begun a new era in public education for the good of the United States of America.

I better quit before some of us fall out. [*Laughter*] I know it. When you get the President, and he blows a lot of hot air—[*laughter*—but I do want to thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the people of this good school for believing in the best, for having such a clear vision about what's possible, about believing in the worth of every child. I want to thank the teachers. I appreciate your love and compassion. I want to thank you for never settling for mediocrity, for always aiming high.

I want to thank the citizens who are here, the moms and dads. By the way, a child's first teacher is a mother or a father. That's the first teacher a child has. I like to remind people that we need to promote a culture of personal responsibility in America that starts with moms and dads who understand they're responsible for loving their child with all their heart. And by the way, a part of that personal responsibility society is one that says if you've got a problem with the school in the community in which you live, you do something about it. See? You don't rely on some faraway Government to take care of it. Do something about it.

Part of this responsibility era says if you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And finally, a responsibility society is one in which each of us loves our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

It's such an honor to be here at Butterfield, in Van Buren, Arkansas. I'm proud to be here. Thanks for coming out to say hello. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Todd Marshall, principal, Butterfield Junior High School; and Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas.

Statement on Signing the Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 11, 2004

Today I have signed an Executive order implementing sanctions on Syria pursuant to the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003. These sanctions will significantly reduce the level of trade and commercial activity between our two countries and, in particular, target entities and officials in or closely associated with the Syrian Government who have engaged in actions of concern specified in the act.

Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a state sponsor of terrorism due to its support for groups such as Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist organizations. In 2003, Congress passed the SAA because of Syria's continued support for terrorism, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, occupation of Lebanon, and actions undermining U.S. and international efforts with respect to Iraq. Based on Syria's failure to take significant, concrete steps to address the concerns we have raised, I have determined that further economic sanctions be imposed.

The Syrian Government must understand that its conduct alone will determine the duration of the sanctions and the extent to which additional sanctions may be imposed

should the Syrian Government fail to adopt a more constructive approach to relations with its neighbors, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism.

If the Syrian Government demonstrates a genuine intention to seek true peace by confronting terror and violence, ending its pursuit and development of weapons of mass destruction, and respecting the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon, the United States will respond positively.

Similarly, I urge the Syrian Government to offer its full support to the goal of a stable and sovereign Iraq, beginning with redoubled efforts along the border to prevent the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq. The Syrian Government has taken some steps in this regard but must do more, given that individuals bent on sowing terror continue to cross into Iraq from Syria. Additionally, it is time for the Syrian Government to comply with its obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483 and immediately transfer assets belonging to the former Iraqi regime to the Development Fund for Iraq.

This is a momentous time in the Middle East. I call upon the Syrian Government to join the ranks of those nations that have committed themselves to political and economic reform, a decision that would benefit—first and foremost—the people of Syria. I sincerely hope that the Syrian Government will conclude that its interests are best served by joining efforts to build a Middle East that is stable, secure, and free from terror and violence.

Executive Order 13338—Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 11, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*) (NEA), the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of